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sugar, dates, chestnuts, etc., again making the date, chestnut wish for children.

Age at Marriage

Fourteen and 16 were the ages when the largest number of boys were married. Sixteen and 18 were the most popular ages for the girls. Some boys were married when they were only seven years old. Twelve was the youngest age for the girls. About 1.5 per cent of the women were over 25 when they married. Occasionally one was over 30, but in our study of 5,255 families there were only three unmarried females over 22 years of age. About one per cent of the men were over 40 when they married.

The average age at marriage, in two groups of families, was 17.2 and 18.7 for the males and 17.7 for both groups of females.

The size of the family income had a great influence on the age at which the sons were married. In a group of families with less than 50 mu of land, the average age of the husbands, at marriage, was 18.4 years. One-third were married before they were 15 years old. In the families with 100 mu or more the average age was only 13.2 years and 80.8 per cent were married before they were 15. There was not nearly as much difference for the girls. The average age for the poorer group was 17.8 years. It was 16.8 for the wealthier group. The figures are given in more detail in Chapter II.

Because so many more of the boys were married before they were 16 years old, it was natural that we should find a large proportion, 69.7 per cent, of the wives older than their husbands, in one instance as much as 11 years older. The husband was the older in 24.6 per cent of the couples. In those couples the maximum difference was 28 years. It was as much as 10 years for 6.1 per cent of the couples.

The average age at marriage appeared to be rising at the time of our study. Longer and more general school attendance, the efforts of reform groups, and outside ideas, were some of the influences helping to reduce the number of early marriages. One group was attempting to make 20 the minimum age for boys and 16 the minimum for girls.

Marriage after Death

Sometimes when a mature unmarried boy died his family would get a match-maker to arrange a wedding between the boy and a girl

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588 who had died unmarried. The couple might be buried in adjoining graves as was usual for a husband and wife. Their spirits could be together in the other world and they would not be lonely, as an heir could be picked who would carry on the ancestral worship and prevent their spirits wandering as orphans. If the wedding was arranged the chosen heir would go to the woman's home carrying in his hand a paper banner in which was written her name, age, etc. Accompanied by her family, he would bring her coffin to the boy's family graveyard. Sometimes it was the girl's family who took the initiative and called in the match-maker.

Death

764 When death occurred the first duty of the family was to dress the body in its grave clothes lest the spirit of the dead person make its entrance into the other world undressed. The clothes were usually purchased before death occurred so that they would be available for prompt use. A man was dressed in a big hat, a new pair of shoes, trousers, and a single cotton gown. A woman's head-dress was a piece of yellow cloth instead of a hat. The grave clothes had no buttons or buttonholes. The trousers of both men and women were fastened at the ankle with strings instead of the usual ankle bands. A small silver bell, with a string attached to it, was put into the dead person's mouth. The string hung outside the mouth. Poor families used a copper cash instead of a silver bell.

763 White papers folded and cut into three strips were hung outside the family gate to announce a death in the home. The papers were hung on the left side of the gate for a male, on the right side for a female. (Right and left are of a person looking out of the gate.) Later a large square of white paper was posted outside the gate. On it were written the deceased's name, age, and the date and time of his birth. The large square paper, too, was posted on the left of the gate for a male and on the right for a female. Still later mourning cards were sent to friends and relatives to announce the death and give the dates set for any special services, interment, etc.

764 When the body had been dressed in its funeral clothes it was taken from the k'ang and placed on a wooden board bed. On the bed was placed a mattress made of yellow-gold cloth, lined with blue cloth and filled with cotton. A wooden pillow was put under the corpse's head.

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764 expense for different class families was approximately $600, $360, $70, and $40.

76 588 The ceremonies and costs were highest for parents and those in the older generation. Infants and small children were buried with practically no ceremony. Older unmarried children had but little more ceremony as they generally could not be buried in the regular family graveyard. Sometimes the marriage match-maker was called in to arrange a wedding for the deceased child with an unmarried person of the opposite sex who died about the same time. In some cases the couple could then be buried in the main graveyard; in others they would have to be interred in a separate plot.

764 A man and wife were buried side by side in the same grave from three to four feet apart. Too great a distance might mean misfortune for the family.

In many of the villages some land was set aside for a public graveyard for poor families who could not afford to buy a grave plot.

769 618 For some of the large families who had been long in Ting Hsien the maintenance of the family graveyard was a matter for the entire clan and involved many related families and many people. A notice was sent out to each family of the clan, by the chairman for the year, giving the time of the memorial service on Ch'ing Ming and the first of the 10th moon. A fine of one or two catties of wine was imposed on anyone who was intentionally absent. The families met at the home of the chairman and went together to the family graveyard to repair the graves and worship the ancestors with offerings, paper money, and incense.

After the worship service the group often ate and drank together and discussed the repairing of the tombs, the planting of trees, the leasing of the clan property, and any other clan problems. The chairman, collectors, business manager, and clerk were elected by the members. The chairman served for one year. If no cooks were secured the collectors were responsible for preparing the feast. In some cases only the elders "of a suitable age" attended the "eating meeting". In others any one belonging to the clan was qualified to participate in the meeting, but it was generally customary for no women or children to attend.

The expenses for the care of the tombs and the "eating meeting" were met from the income from the clan property, or, if there was no property or the income was not sufficient to cover the expenses, by contributions from those who attended.